

The Bureau of Land Management's
Outdoor Recreation and Visitor Services
Accomplishments Report
2006-2008



Bureau of Land Management



Recreation and Visitor Services

The BLM's mandate for its Recreation and Visitor Services program is to serve the diverse outdoor recreation needs of visitors while helping them conserve the National System of Public Lands and its recreation opportunities.

Your National System of Public Lands

The 256 million acres of public lands managed by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) are your lands. The BLM, on behalf of the American public, is the steward for one-eighth of the land surface of the United States, and most BLM-managed lands and associated waters are open for public use and enjoyment. The special landscapes and world-class recreation opportunities offered by the BLM's National System of Public Lands are among America's greatest treasures. These lands span myriad natural systems – from temperate rainforests to deserts to the arctic – that serve as settings for recreational activities as diverse as the landscape itself. In many cases, these lands constitute America's backyard, providing close-to-home outdoor recreation venues.

The units of the National System of Public Lands and their related waters are no longer the recreation community's best-kept secret in the West. These increasingly popular sites offer visitors more diverse and rapidly evolving recreation opportunities, and do so across a broader geographic area, than those of any other Federal agency. The BLM also differs from most Federal agencies by managing resource-dependent recreation within a multiple-use management framework. This allows for a wide menu of opportunities – both traditional and new. These choices include the traditional recreation activities — such as hiking, hunting, fishing, boating, and camping — and a variety of newer activities: off-highway vehicle riding, model-rocket launching, land speed trials, hang gliding, base jumping, jet boat racing, rock climbing, geocaching, caving, mountain biking, and whitewater rafting. In an increasingly urbanized West, these recreational opportunities and the landscape settings in which they take place not only make a vital contribution to the quality of life of Westerners, but also provide enjoyment to other U.S. as well as international visitors.

Recreational use on the National System of Public Lands helps support the economies of Western communities and states. More than 55 million people now live within 25 miles of BLM public lands, and two-thirds of these lands are within 50 miles of an urban area. Visits to recreation sites on BLM-managed lands and waters have significantly increased over the years, from 51 million in 2001 to 57 million in 2008.



Reference: <http://www.blm.gov/nstc/jurisdictions/>

BLM Message

The BLM manages more land than any other agency in the United States, located primarily in the American West, including Alaska. Eight of the 12 Western states that have been called the “Remnants of the American Frontier” have seen their populations grow by more than 50 percent during the last 25 years, with the largest growth centered in urban areas. As a result, the demand for outdoor recreation in the West has risen substantially – by 65 percent in the last 30 years. This vast and uniquely American public estate, combined with diverse BLM outdoor recreation settings, attracts nearly 57 million visits annually. The BLM is privileged to be your steward of these great Western lands known for their open spaces, rich history, array of natural resources, including wildlife, and their abundance of recreational opportunities.

Outdoor recreation is integral to the American lifestyle and is inseparably linked to the Western quality of life. Driven by a growing U.S. population and rising international visitation, the public demand for recreation on Western public lands continues to intensify. This has led to greater recreational use and to more diverse forms of such use – not to mention an increase in user conflicts and controversy over the most appropriate uses and management of the National System of Public Lands. Significant challenges arise from the growing complexity of land uses and the need for stronger mitigation of impacts from recreational use. The BLM is responding by 1) transitioning to a more efficient and collaborative outcome-focused management framework; 2) using a comprehensive approach to managing roads and trails for travel and access; 3) improving visitor services and access for persons with disabilities; 4) improving business practices, fee program oversight, and accountability; and 5) continuing to sustain partnerships while leveraging limited resources.

BLM-managed lands and resources, which contribute to the social fabric and identity of many Western rural communities, are reminiscent of the Old West. This yesteryear quality is what seems to transport people back to a simpler time and place, where they can escape the confines of city life and reconnect with the rural countryside and perhaps even with their own rural roots. This applies not only to visitors, but also to those growing numbers of people who are choosing to live near the National System of Public Lands.

Public lands and local communities are inseparable, and both enrich the human spirit and improve one’s quality of life in countless ways. Ours is the privilege of conserving a public land legacy that acknowledges the simple enjoyment of being alive and being in the outdoors. We invite you and your family to renew yourselves and re-discover your national heritage as you explore and recreate on your public lands.

The extraordinary size of this uniquely American public estate, combined with the vast diversity of outdoor recreation settings, attracted almost 57 million visitors to the National System of Public Lands in 2008 – an increase of more than six million visits from 2001. This rise in visitation is expected to continue in the coming years.

Executive Summary

The Bureau of Land Management's recreation program is one of the key elements of the BLM's multiple-use mission, one that brings the agency into direct contact with the public it serves and contributes to the nation's quality of life. In fact, outdoor recreation opportunities on the National System of Public Lands are a key factor that has attracted, and continues to attract, so many people to the West. The BLM's Recreation and Visitor Services Program works to apply innovative solutions to contemporary challenges and changing needs as it delivers outdoor recreation services on BLM-managed lands.

This adaptive management approach has been especially critical in recent years, as the American public has begun to seriously discuss and confront the health impacts of lack of physical activity and increasing obesity. There is also greater awareness that many from the current generation of American youth may have missed the opportunity to discover and connect with the great outdoors and thus failed to reap the benefits of exploring nature and participating in outdoor activities.

One piece of evidence for this generational loss may be the declining use of some Federal land recreation sites and other outdoor areas. The good news, on the other hand, is that BLM-managed lands are still experiencing an increase in recreation use. Because these lands are often close to rapidly growing urban areas in the Western United States, the Bureau is positioned to be a major player in helping our nation's citizens recover from the adverse impacts of physical inactivity, obesity, and a loss of connection with nature and the great outdoors.

The National System of Public Lands continues as the destination of choice for those seeking unstructured outdoor recreation opportunities on large, undeveloped tracts of land that often remind the visitor of the Old West. In addition, the expansion of Western cities, suburbs, and towns has often brought urbanization to the very boundary of BLM lands. As a result, public lands have become the "backyard" of many Westerners and the closest and best place to pursue outdoor recreation interests.

The BLM increasingly manages recreation and visitor services in a manner that involves both public and private partners – a collaborative approach that generates benefits for recreationists, nearby residents, and local communities. This type of cooperation is reflected in land-use plans, interpretive programs, recreation infrastructure, and other management actions. Among the important management objectives are providing universal access; accommodating the growing diversity of recreational demands; reaching out to groups of non-users; serving traditional users; implementing programs to re-engage the nation's youth in the great outdoors; sponsoring educational programs to mitigate conflicts between recreationists and other public land users; and adopting modern business practices that efficiently provide recreation opportunities.

The BLM is following a 21st-century public land management model that takes into account areas designated as part of the agency's 27 million-acre National Landscape Conservation System (NLCS), where it is especially important to ensure that public use does not degrade the values for which these special areas were established. The recreation benefits offered by the National System of Public Lands are abundant and diverse. The BLM is committed to making sure that these benefits are available both now and in the future.

The BLM's recreation program produces numerous individual, community, social, environmental, and economic outcomes for the American people. The recreation program is currently working on 52 Resource Management Plans to sustain and optimize these benefits resulting from recreational use of the National System of Public Lands.

Planning for and Providing Benefits

To ensure protection for and the best balance of uses of America's National System of Public Lands, the BLM undertakes extensive land-use planning through a collaborative approach with local, state, and Tribal governments; stakeholder groups; and the general public. The result is a set of land-use plans – called Resource Management Plans (RMPs) – that help guide decisions for every action and approved use on the 256 million-acre National System of Public Lands. As part of these critical planning efforts, the BLM is shifting from managing for specific recreation activities to managing for the physical, mental, and social benefits that an individual achieves through participation in outdoor recreation, together with the important benefits that recreation and tourism provide to communities near BLM-managed lands.

- **Managing Public Lands Recreation for Positive Outcomes** – Providing quality recreation and visitor services on BLM lands is increasingly important to the future of the West and to the quality of life of its residents and visitors. As the Bureau works to ensure the availability of diverse recreational opportunities, the BLM's management emphasis has shifted from a traditional "activity-based" approach to a broader one that focuses on managing for individual, community, social, environmental, and economic outcomes. This new approach includes maintaining the recreation settings that support positive outcomes.
- **Implementing Best Practices for Recreation Planning and Management** – To advance contemporary planning and management performance that will ultimately improve delivery of public land visitor services, the BLM has begun a multi-year process to update its Recreation and Visitor Services manuals and handbooks. These updated guidance documents include those governing the agency's fee and permitting program; recreation planning; cave management; and travel and transportation management.
- **Expediting Environmental Reviews and Improving Customer Service** – To reduce costs and simplify the environmental review process for small outdoor recreation events and group activities on the National System of Public Lands, the BLM updated and revised its categorical exclusion (CX) procedures. This change has enabled the BLM to process more quickly most non-controversial recreation-related permit applications, resulting in better service to the public.

The BLM's recreation program concentrates on managing activities and addressing issues at its more than 3,500 recreation sites. The program also manages travel on over 98,000 miles of inventoried routes and another 500,000 miles of routes inherited from historical access and use patterns dating back nearly 200 years.

Public Access

Recreation opportunities on the National System of Public Lands are useful only to the extent that the public has access to them. The BLM's Recreation and Visitor Services program is dedicated to providing the most extensive access possible to the land it manages and to the facilities and programs it provides. In so doing, the BLM focuses on two distinct types of access. The first is the ability to gain physical access to the land by road or other appropriate means. This may be accomplished by acquiring legal access where none exists and by developing access routes and support facilities. The second concerns the BLM's goal to improve access for persons of all abilities to recreation facilities, programs, services, and activities on the public lands.

- **Managing for All Modes of Travel** – The BLM launched a comprehensive travel policy and planning effort by using an agency-wide integrated transportation systems planning framework that embraces all resource programs. The BLM completed the critical first steps of this effort by establishing data standards, developing terminology, and providing definitions for roads, trails, and temporary routes.
- **Mapping the West / Improving Transportation Maps and Data** – The BLM's new road and trail inventory guidance has improved consistency of mapping and data quality for planning and management of transportation systems. These new inventory standards will dramatically improve maps and data for the public and resource managers alike.
- **Promoting Responsible Motorized Recreation and Travel** – The BLM continues to implement actions and support partnerships referred to in its National Management Strategy on Motorized Off-Highway Vehicle (OHV) Use. The BLM completed work on planning guidance, monitoring, education, and stewardship partnerships related to OHV use. The BLM also increased its funding commitments for OHV management, especially through the agency's successful fund-matching Challenge Cost Share program. These efforts aim to minimize the potential negative effects of motorized recreation and travel on public land resources.
- **Resolving Complex Travel Management Issues** – The Roads and Trails Terminology Report was developed to help resolve various complex travel management issues. Toward that end, the report called for establishing common travel management terminology, creating a standardized database, and taking other critical steps for managing transportation-related linear features. Providing consistent measures and definitions enables the work of land managers to be more accessible to the general public.

- **Accurately Inventorying Travel Routes** – The first step in travel management is having a complete route inventory. To ensure consistency in the inventory process, the BLM completed a Route Inventory Guide Technical Reference that describes “best practices” for planning and conducting route inventories. Local BLM field offices use these tools for all aspects of travel route planning and management, including outreach efforts to involve the public in this process.
- **Improving Access for Persons with Disabilities** – The BLM continued an aggressive program to improve recreation site accessibility for people with disabilities. A total of 441 comprehensive accessibility evaluations have been conducted at major BLM recreation sites, including 65 percent of the BLM recreation fee sites. These evaluations showed that nearly all BLM recreation sites have some accessible features, with eight percent found to be “universally accessible.” The BLM continues to implement accessibility retrofit projects based on these evaluations.
- **Providing Access for All** – The BLM worked with the U.S. Access Board to prepare a proposed national rulemaking for accessible outdoor developed areas. When adopted, these standards will guide the BLM in developing and enhancing outdoor recreation opportunities for all people, including those with disabilities.

The BLM's annual visitor satisfaction survey shows a 94 percent satisfaction rating for 2006, a 92 percent rating for 2007, and a 95 percent satisfaction rating for 2008, indicating a consistent and remarkably high public satisfaction rate for visitors' recreation experiences on the National System of Public Lands.

Enhancing Your Outdoor Recreation Experiences

The BLM connects people and recreational settings in a number of ways – from developing maps, signs, brochures, and other descriptive information to providing facilities that ensure visitor health, safety, and comfort. Designating trails, byways, and other transportation routes that showcase the diversity of recreation on the National System of Public Lands also helps maintain the special qualities that draw visitors to these places. Best practices and appropriate guidelines for managing trails and visual resources help ensure that the land continues to offer the desired experiences for visitors and benefits for local communities.

- **Improving Opportunities for Hunting, Fishing, and Shooting Sports** – In response to the nationwide decline in hunting and fishing recreational activities, the BLM is helping to improve opportunities for fishing, hunting, and shooting sport activities on the National System of Public Lands. The BLM, USDA Forest Service, and the Fish and Wildlife Service signed a Memorandum of Understanding with 38 private organizations to enhance recreational shooting and hunting opportunities on public lands by improving motorized and non-motorized access; disseminating information through signs, brochures, and maps; and promoting hunting ethics and heritage education. The BLM and the two other agencies also began implementing an Executive Order that is aimed at preserving our nation's hunting heritage and conserving wildlife.
- **Improving Understanding of Those Recreating on Public Lands** – To improve service to recreation visitors to the National System of Public Lands, the BLM and the University of Idaho have partnered on a social science research project to better understand visitor satisfaction and meet mandatory Federal performance reporting requirements. The project also gives social science students the opportunity for hands-on experiences. In another effort to strengthen its developing social science program, the BLM is pilot-testing the Forest Service's National Visitor Use Monitoring program to determine its effectiveness and efficiency and to consider whether the BLM should also use it.
- **Implementing Land Health Indicators** – To protect public land resources, the BLM and Northern Arizona University completed a pilot study in 2007 that applied land health indicators to recreation areas where off-highway vehicle (OHV) use occurs. This study will help build a monitoring framework for OHV and other recreation uses.
- **Expanding National Recreation Trails System** – The BLM now manages 34 National Recreation Trails totaling nearly 500 miles. The latest additions to the system under BLM management are Utah's Fisher Towers Trail and Alaska's Campbell Tract Trail.

Several recent scientific studies confirm that outdoor recreation is important to the physical and mental well-being of our citizens. The BLM strives to ensure that today's youth and their families take advantage of the wonderful outdoor recreation opportunities on the National System of Public Lands – using these lands safely, responsibly, and with as much freedom as possible.

Children and Nature – Healthy Families/Healthy Kids

Recent studies concerning the health and outdoor activities of children expose two alarming trends. First, today's youth are less physically active than earlier generations, resulting in increased childhood obesity and related diseases, such as diabetes. Second, our nation's youth tend to be neither familiar with, nor engaged in, the outdoors. Studies show that children who regularly participate in recreational activities are healthier – both physically and mentally. In response to these trends, the BLM is encouraging America's children and their families to spend more time outdoors on the National System of Public Lands. The BLM's goal is to enhance children's appreciation for the wonderful world of nature, to address problems of physical and mental health brought on by inactivity, and to promote public land stewardship.

- **Promoting Outdoor Activities** – The BLM already reaches over three million youth annually through its existing education and recreation programs, and seeks to reach even more through a new effort aimed at reconnecting America's families and children to the outdoors. The goal of the program is to actively involve children and their families in outdoor activities on BLM-managed lands, improve their health, and develop future stewards of the public lands. Incentive funding provides additional financial support for field projects that use partnerships to help increase the outdoor activities of children.
- **Agencies and Organizations Partner to Reconnect Children with Nature** – The BLM is developing new strategic partnerships to meet its goals in reconnecting youth with nature. Federal partners include the Forest Service, Fish and Wildlife Service, National Park Service, and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. Non-governmental organization partners include the National Association of Recreation Resource Planners, International Mountain Bicycling Association, and the American Recreation Coalition. A united front of both Federal and non-Federal partners ensures progress on an issue critical to the health and well-being of America's youth.
- **Children and Nature Networking** – A BLM national team is helping BLM field offices better network and engage children in the outdoors. The Bureau has also revised its outdoor activity Website by linking to the Children and Nature Network (which supports people and organizations working to reconnect children with nature); listing BLM contacts for youth outdoor activities; and delivering up-to-date technical assistance for supporting outdoor activities and partnerships.

- **Introducing Urban Youth to the Outdoors** – The Wonderful Outdoor World (WOW) program continues to engage urban youth in Virginia, Arizona, California, and Washington, D.C., in outdoor activities. In 2007, over 800 youth participated in campouts in urban parks, where they slept under the stars and learned camping skills and “Leave No Trace” outdoor ethics.
- **Engaging Youth in Outdoor Activities through Scout Programs** – BLM employees throughout the West continue their work with scout troops to promote stewardship through educational and interpretive programs. These include the BLM’s outreach to the Girl Scouts of America via the “Linking Girls to the Land” program and its teaching of outdoor ethics to the Boy Scouts of America.

Many can find their way to the great outdoors on the National System of Public Lands, but don't know how to care for what they see and enjoy. Providing for educational and stewardship opportunities and interpretation of natural and cultural resources is central to the BLM's mission.

Promoting Education and Stewardship

As more people find their way to the great outdoors on the National System of Public Lands, they want to learn more about nature and how to care for what they see and experience. The BLM is training more staff and engaging more volunteers to provide information, interpretation, and hosting services as part of an effort to better serve its visitors. This training, in turn, encourages responsible visitor use and stewardship of the public lands.

- **Trailer Education Unit Promotes Public Lands Stewardship** – A “Tread Lightly” Traveling Education Unit was created for use throughout the West as a multi-dimensional educational tool. The unit resulted from a partnership comprising the BLM, the Tread Lightly stewardship education program, and corporate sponsors. Already the education unit has been used at select events and BLM-sponsored activities where OHV ethics education is conducted and promoted.
- **Stewardship Education Reaches Thousands of Visitors** – The BLM's stewardship programs have reached out to thousands of visitors and students using an array of approaches and venues. Among the most effective is the Leave No Trace education program, which reached more than 40,000 annual visitors at the Burning Man Festival in Nevada in 2006, 2007, and 2008. This popular event, which takes place under a permit on BLM lands, is the largest Leave No Trace event in the world. The BLM staff work with festival planners to promote stewardship of public lands by integrating Leave No Trace information and practices into festival activities and the festival's Website.
- **Providing Outdoor Ethics Education in Schools** – BLM partner Tread Lightly!® delivered its *On the Right Trail* program outdoor ethics and stewardship message to more than 2,500 students during the 2007 school year. Through this and other programs, students learn how to minimize their impact on lands and how to be considerate of others when riding all-terrain vehicles or dirt bikes.
- **Improving Visitor Services through Innovative Interpretive Facilities** – To improve visitor services, the BLM recently completed exhibit and facility oversight at five key interpretive projects in several Western states: the Cleveland-Lloyd Visitor Center; the Red Rock Desert interpretive/education facilities; the Upper Missouri River Breaks National Monument Interpretive Center; the Pompeys Pillar exhibits; and the Pony Express Long Distance Trail. The BLM also developed more than 25 new interpretive sites and wayside exhibits in 2007 as a means of better connecting with dispersed recreation users.

- **Responding to Public Demand for Improved Education and Interpretive Programs** – In response to public demand for quality education and interpretive programming, the BLM participated in several interagency efforts to improve delivery of interpretive services to visitors and to more efficiently manage interpretive programs and facilities. These included providing certified interpretive training for staff and managers, and developing standard definitions for environmental education.
- **Connecting to Visitors through Modern Technologies** – The BLM actively adopts modern technologies in its outreach, especially to younger audiences. For example, the BLM's Red Rock Canyon National Conservation Area staff assisted Nevada's Clark County Desert Conservation Program to produce six "Desert Conservation and Ethics" video segments that reached over 250,000 households. Each program, based on Leave No Trace and Tread Lightly principles, was shown on local cable TV and is downloadable from the Internet. One segment, the "Life of a Desert Tortoise" series, won a Tony award for "Best Educational Video" in 2006. In another case, BLM staff worked with partners to develop a multimedia knowledge center and virtual experience computer program for the Interagency Information Center in St. George, Utah. This program is also available via the Internet.
- **Special Events at Trail Centers Remain Popular** – BLM's National Trails interpretive centers hosted several popular interpretive special events, including: California Trail Day at Nevada's California Trail Center, featuring a re-created 1850s military camp, packing wagon, children pioneer games, and many special demonstrations; a fifth anniversary celebration at Wyoming's National Historic Trails Interpretive Center; and the National Historic Oregon Trail Visitor Center's ongoing series of special events that complemented their regular interpretive programs as well as their "living history" demonstrations about the Westward migration and life on the Oregon Trail.
- **Making Connections along Byways and Historic Trails** – The BLM continues to help people connect to their National System of Public Lands and the nation's heritage by expanding and enhancing interpretation along byways and historic trails. BLM-sponsored activities included hundreds of interpretive hikes, along with visitor and school programs that help visitors connect with the natural and cultural resources along these routes.

The BLM's recreation program uses many national-level partnerships to create valuable recreation opportunities. These national partnerships and many more state and local recreation partnerships help the BLM deliver the benefits of outdoor recreation to visitors and neighboring communities.

Partnerships and Cooperative Conservation

The BLM relies on collaborative partnerships with public and private recreation stakeholders to serve critical customer needs, meet its stewardship and service commitments, and maintain the economic viability of neighboring communities. Recreation and tourism on the National System of Public Lands are supported by numerous BLM alliances with volunteer groups that help accomplish specific projects. More broadly, the BLM looks to representatives of the recreation tourism industry, local and state authorities, and others as managing partners in charting the future of public land recreation and tourism.

BLM-managed lands offer sustainable recreation opportunities that furnish social and economic benefits to both local communities and the nation. Forming partnerships and cooperative ventures to support recreation use in these special American places is perhaps the best way to preserve the viability and character of many rural Western communities.

- **Geotourism Projects Promote Sustainable Tourism** – The BLM initiated a cooperative conservation prototype project that produced a U.S.-Mexico Sonoran Desert Geotourism MapGuide; provided free, Web-based maps and visitor information; and initiated educational programs for small businesses and schools in both Arizona and Mexico. The conservation project was directed by the Arizona and Sonora Geotourism Councils, which worked together with local communities; the Arizona Tourism Department; the Sonora, Mexico, Tourism Department; and the National Geographic Center for Sustainable Destinations. The success of the prototype geotourism project prompted the development of additional BLM geotourism projects to promote sustainable tourism in Idaho, Wyoming, and California. The BLM also partnered in a second international geotourism effort for the Montana and Canada “Crown of the Continent” region.
- **National Geographic Partnership Solidifies Geotourism Commitments** – Based on the grassroots success of the pilot geotourism projects, the BLM initiated a geotourism Memorandum of Understanding with the National Geographic Center for Sustainable Destinations and with other Federal land-management agencies. This partnership will stimulate coordinated efforts by local communities and other tourism partners in support of sustainable tourism practices.

- **Promoting Arizona’s “Special Places”** – To distribute visitor information about outstanding natural areas and outdoor recreation opportunities for residents of Arizona, the second fastest-growing state, the BLM developed a “Special Places” newspaper insert. This was done in partnership with the Forest Service, the *Arizona Republic*, and the Arizona Tourism Department. The insert included visitor information, responsible use messages, and local Gateway Community information.
- **Partners Outdoors Conferences Promote Innovation** – The BLM co-hosts an annual Partners Outdoors conference with other Federal agencies and the American Recreation Coalition to work together on ways to meet contemporary outdoor recreation challenges. These conferences produce results in improving public land recreation management – such as, most recently, interagency and non-governmental organization efforts to encourage greater youth participation in outdoor activities.
- **Recreation Partnerships Leverage Recreation Resources** – The BLM maintained and expanded key public land partnerships that resulted in additional resources to better manage public land recreation. These BLM partnerships include such organizations as the Public Lands Council, Sporting Conservation Council, America’s Byways Resource Center, American Hiking Society, American Trails, National Off-Highway Vehicle Conservation Council, and International Mountain Biking Association.
- **Partnering Promotes Tourism and Collaboration with Local Communities** – The BLM also expanded partnerships with states and communities for such management concerns as tourism, public safety, and quality of life. Among the partnerships were those with the National Association of Counties, Western Governors Association, Western Sheriffs’ Association, National Association of State Parks Directors, and the Western States Tourism Policy Council.
- **Partnering with Interpretive Associations at BLM Visitor Centers Enhances Interpretation and Education Opportunities** – The BLM continues its strong relationship with interpretive association partners at most BLM Visitor Centers. These partners manage facilities that provide books and products to the public, which are directly related to BLM interpretive themes. Sales income is used to improve and augment visitor center information, exhibits, and interpretive programs.

The BLM works to deliver excellent customer service while receiving fair value for its recreation program. Recognizing the importance of its relationships with visitors and small business customers, the BLM's recreation program refines its business practices for easier use and reporting, and to better leverage scarce resources.

Better Business Practices

The BLM manages recreation in concert with the Department of the Interior's strategic business plan, which seeks two fundamental goals: increasing accountability and advancing modernization /integration. The BLM monitors performance using such measures as customer satisfaction and the economic efficiency of providing recreation opportunities. For example, recreation fee site proposals are vetted through an extensive public input process that allows users to have a say in both where fees are charged and the levels of those fees. The BLM also is embracing the benefits of the Internet, from allowing Web-based campsite reservations to improving the content and format of its recreation Websites.

Most of the recreation that takes place on the 256 million acres of the National System of Public Lands is dispersed and does not involve any fee. Of the 3,000 BLM-managed recreation sites, only about 300 require fees. In 2008, 84 percent of surveyed fee-paying visitors found the BLM's recreation fee levels to be "about right" or "too low."

- **Ensuring Consistent Fee and Permit Practices** – In an effort to consolidate recreation program policy and guidance, and to ensure compliance with legal requirements of the Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act of 2004 (REA), the BLM completed comprehensive revisions to its recreation permits and fees manual and companion handbook. The revised manual serves as a compendium of all agency recreation fee and permit policies, and the "how-to" handbook contains specific guidance and clarification for field personnel in issuing, administering, evaluating, and monitoring all types of recreation permits and fees. These companion documents enable the BLM to provide recreation services through improved administrative consistency and to implement better business practices in working with outfitters and guides, other commercial permittees, and the general public.
- **Independent Assessment of the Recreation Fee and Permit Program Help Protect Public Investment** – The BLM reinstated independent evaluations of its recreation fee and permit program as part of its ongoing effort to ensure accountability and consistency in its recreation permit and fee program. The evaluations also help verify compliance with REA. The evaluation process includes a uniform methodology, online surveys, on-site verifications, and developing and implementing recommendations based on the findings. The BLM evaluated one pilot state in FY 2007 and two additional states in FY 2008; two states will be evaluated annually in subsequent years.

The BLM also conducts an independent audit by a certified public accounting firm of the commercial outfitters, vendors, and event permittees. The objectives of the audit are to determine if the BLM has collected fees in accordance with the terms and conditions of the Special Recreation Permit (SRP); to evaluate the SRP holder's accounting system; and to determine the adequacy of BLM recordkeeping processes, procedures, and actions pertaining to SRP administration. Through contracting, the BLM performed independent audits in two states in FY 2008 and will continue to audit two states in FY 2009 and subsequent years.

- **Public Input on Fee Proposals Confirms Public Support** – Providing opportunities for public input is integral to good land management and effective customer service. In 2006, the Departments of the Interior and Agriculture agreed on a public advisory committee structure to look at and comment on recreation fee proposals of the BLM and the Forest Service. These Recreation Resource Advisory Councils (RACs) make recommendations on agency proposals to implement new or change existing recreation fees. In combination with other public notification and communication efforts, Recreation RACs contribute to the high level of public satisfaction with BLM recreation fee programs.
- **Internet-based “Toolbox for the Great Outdoors” Assists in Recreation Funding, Planning, and Management** – To take advantage of the numerous financial and technical resources that are available for developing, managing, and funding outdoor recreation opportunities on the National System of Public Lands, the BLM has joined with other Federal agencies and the American Recreation Coalition to make an Internet-based “Toolbox for the Great Outdoors” available to its field offices and recreation partners. The Toolbox, which is continually updated, makes it easy to find resources and solutions to advance high-quality recreation opportunities for the public. This information has already helped state and field staff develop partnerships, leverage resources, and build long-term, collaborative management of recreation resources.
- **Recreation and Volunteer Websites Help Recruit Partners and Disseminate Information** – The BLM expanded its use of Web-based information systems, such as *Recreation.gov*, *Volunteer.gov*, and the BLM's own recreation Website to improve customer service and enhance the quality of information available to visitors, volunteers, partners, and its own staff. In 2007, the BLM completed a comprehensive revision and expansion of its recreation and visitor services public Website that presents recreation information in a state-of-the-art format. The site describes what to see and do on BLM-managed lands and how to visit these lands responsibly. The Website also contains regulations, guidance, and references for BLM staff, agency partners, and the general public.

In tandem with dramatic increases in recreation access needs, the BLM now manages almost eight times as many recreation sites and facilities as it did 25 years ago. This means more recreation opportunities for the public, but also higher costs for maintaining healthy and safe operations. The challenge associated with this recreation growth is how to best protect special places and the extraordinary outdoor experiences they provide.

National Landscape Conservation System

The BLM's National Landscape Conservation System (NLCS) contains some of the West's most spectacular landscapes. Created in 2000 by the Secretary of the Interior, the NLCS brought into a single system specially designated areas managed on a landscape level under the BLM's multiple-use mandate. The System comprises more than 885 Congressionally or Presidentially recognized areas and approximately 27 million acres of National Conservation Areas, National Monuments, Wilderness Areas, Wilderness Study Areas, Wild and Scenic Rivers, and National Historic and Scenic Trails.

One year short of its 10th Anniversary, recent passage of the Omnibus Public Lands Management Act (P.L. 111-11) provides a statutory basis for the NLCS and adds 929,000 acres of Wilderness, one National Monument, four National Conservation Areas, 362 miles of Wild and Scenic Rivers, and 40 miles of National Scenic and Historic Trails. Because the NLCS is relatively new, it is also relatively unknown. The BLM is working to inform the American public of the National Landscape Conservation System and its importance to ecological, scientific, societal, recreational, and cultural interests.

The NLCS is diverse, encompassing red-rock deserts, rugged ocean coastlines, deep-river canyons, and broad Alaskan tundra. Many areas are remote and wild, but others are surprisingly accessible. The National Landscape Conservation System also highlights and protects America's cultural legacy. It safeguards American Indian cliff dwellings and cultural sites, and preserves the remaining traces of our nation's historic trails and pathways. Because of the special resources contained in the NLCS areas, these units are especially popular destinations for tourists and recreationists.

As public demand keeps growing for recreation sites and facilities on the National System of Public Lands, the BLM faces new challenges in balancing the protection of NLCS units with the need to ensure access for the public to explore BLM-managed lands. Certain NLCS units have strict limitations on the number of visitors permitted per day while other NLCS units are visited by millions annually. The BLM's Recreation and Visitor Services Program helps support the management of the NLCS in a manner that preserves the special qualities that led to their inclusion in the National Landscape Conservation System.

BLM's NATIONAL LANDSCAPE CONSERVATION SYSTEM FACTS/FIGURES

22 National Conservation Areas and similar designations 14,783,748 acres

AK - Steese 1,208,624 acres
AZ - Gila Box Riparian 21,767 acres
- Las Cienegas 41,972 acres
- San Pedro Riparian 55,495 acres
CA - California Desert Conservation Area 10,671,080 acres
- Headwaters Forest Reserve 7,472 acres
- King Range 58,151 acres
- Piedras Blancas Light Station Outstanding Natural Area 18 acres
CO - McInnis Canyons 122,929 acres
- Gunnison Gorge 62,844 acres
- Dominguez-Escalante 209,610 acres

FL - Jupiter Inlet Lighthouse Outstanding Natural Area 63 acres
ID - Morley Nelson Snake River Birds of Prey 485,604 acres
NV - Black Rock Desert High Rock Canyon Emigrant Trail 799,165 acres
- Red Rock Canyon 197,382 acres
- Sloan Canyon 48,438 acres
NM - El Malpais 227,100 acres
- Fort Stanton-Snowy River Cave 24,950 acres
OR - Steens Mountain Cooperative Management & Protective Area 428,181 acres
- Yaquina Head Outstanding Natural Area 95 acres
UT - Red Cliffs 44,725 acres
- Beaver Dam Wash 68,083 acres

16 National Monuments 4,813,650 acres

AZ - Agua Fria 70,900 acres
- Grand Canyon-Parashant 808,727 acres
- Ironwood Forest 128,398 acres
- Sonoran Desert 486,600 acres
- Vermilion Cliffs 279,568 acres
CA - California Coastal: 883 acres along 840 miles of coastline
- Carrizo Plain 204,107 acres

- Santa Rosa and San Jacinto 88,513 acres
CO - Canyons of the Ancients 163,892 acres
ID - Craters of the Moon 273,468 acres
MT - Pompeys Pillar 51 acres
- Upper Missouri River Breaks 374,976 acres
NM - Kasha-Katuwe Tent Rocks 4,645 acres
- Prehistoric Trackways 5,280 acres
OR - Cascade-Siskiyou 52,947 acres
UT - Grand Staircase-Escalante 1,870,800 acres

224 Wilderness Areas 8,661,542 acres 545 Wilderness Study Areas 12,790,291 acres

63 Wild and Scenic Rivers 2,415 miles 1,010,196 acres

10 National Historic Trails 5,342 miles

California 1,391 miles
El Camino Real de Tierra Adentro 60 miles
Iditarod 418 miles
Lewis and Clark 369 miles
Mormon Pioneer 213 miles
Nez Perce 70 miles
Oregon 656 miles
Pony Express 697 miles
San Juan Bautista De Anza 116 miles
Old Spanish 887 miles

5 National Scenic Trails 664 miles

Pacific Northwest 9 miles
Arizona Trail 21 miles
Continental Divide 377 miles
Potomac Heritage 2 miles
Pacific Crest 231 miles

OTHER BLM RECREATION OPPORTUNITIES

916 Areas of Critical Environmental Concern
12,946,979 acres
45 National Natural Landmarks 417,429 acres
164 Research Natural Areas 323,350 acres
55 National Back Country Byways 2,952 miles
31 National Recreation Trails 460 miles
375 Special Recreation Management Areas
263 National Register of Historic Places Sites
22 National Historic Landmarks

5 World Heritage Sites in Chacoan Outliers, NM
3 Biosphere Reserves in the California Desert
2 Globally Important Bird Areas 56,500 acres
897 Recorded Caves and Cave Resource Systems
3,496 Recreation Sites (380 fee sites)
510 Campgrounds
47 Recreation Cabins
421 Picnic areas
8 Long-term Visitor Areas (AZ and CA)
87 Visitor Contact/Information Facilities and Centers
38 Watchable Wildlife Viewing Sites
154 Archaeologic or Historic Public Use Sites
362 Boat Ramps and Water Access Sites



BLM: <http://www.blm.gov/wo/st/en.html>

BLM Recreation: <http://www.blm.gov/wo/st/en/prog/Recreation.1.html>

National Landscape Conservation System:
http://www.blm.gov/wo/st/en/prog/blm_special_areas/NLCS.1.html

Heritage Resources: <http://www.blm.gov/wo/st/en/prog/more/CRM.html>

Take It Outside:
http://www.blm.gov/pgdata/content/wo/en/prog/more/Children_and_Nature.html